

# Executive Summary

Our Challenge Statement is to be the city that breaks the cycle of Indigenous youth incarceration by creating a new cycle focused on building purpose, belonging, security and identity.

We worked closely with an Indigenous Youth Advisory Group and with community allies and institutional partners who provide programs and services to Indigenous youth. Understanding and incorporating the experiences and ideas of Indigenous youth is at the centre of this challenge.

The insight that emerged was that the cycle of incarceration begins with a series of harmful decisions. These decisions were often the result of preventative programs and services being too difficult, or unknown to the youth, for them to access in the moment they needed it. By contrast, a series of well-made decisions can give youth a plan and a path to a healthy cycle.

### **A smart city enables its citizens to use technology to make smart decisions.**

The ConnectYXE program described in this proposal uses technology to connect people with programs and services, and to make decisions that will improve their lives. It is a program that supports empowerment, strengthens collaboration and harnesses innovative technology.

**Empowerment of Indigenous youth and their families: providing real time information and options for how to access services throughout the city, every day, all day.** For example, when a youth finishes school for the day, ConnectYXE will give that youth the information to plan out their afternoon and evening: play pick-up basketball in a community gym, have a meal, find a place to sleep, connect with an Elder, and find the public transportation options to reach their destinations.

This information, or the “front-end” of ConnectYXE, will be accessed through a variety of venues ranging from interactive kiosks and public touch screens in malls, stores, and even main transit stops located throughout the city, to a phone app, to a website at a school, or a public library computer. Targeted locations throughout the city will have free Wi-Fi, to ensure ConnectYXE is as available as possible for those critical decision-making moments.

**Collaboration among partners: creating a repository of data of all relevant programs and services available throughout Saskatoon.** Community-based Organizations (CBOs) have been operating in an environment of resource scarcity and fragmented information. Those who participate in ConnectYXE will be provided coordination support and technological capacity to input their activity data into

a data hub, the “back-end” of ConnectYXE. They will be able to access real-time services on an individual use-basis.

**Harnessing innovative technology: connecting systems, sharing data and leveraging artificial intelligence.** The collective data in ConnectYXE will provide a city-wide picture of what is available and the demands on those supports at any time. This enables CBOs, institutional partners, and decision-makers to regularly analyze and to identify gaps, trends, and better ways to respond.

The foundation of ConnectYXE is authentic and on-going engagement with Indigenous youth, community allies and institutional partners. This priority has been built into the governance model of ConnectYXE, with working groups engaging with each other and feeding into a decision-making Council comprised of youth, allies, institutional and technology partner representatives.

A whole-of-community approach, with youth at the centre, is needed to address the complex challenges that urban Indigenous youth face. These challenges are rooted in historical injustices, inter-generational trauma, and racism. And the cycle of family disruption, crime, and incarceration is both a human and economic tragedy that affects the entire city.

Cities across Canada are facing these same challenges, resulting in specific Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action that address them. Call to Action 38 is: We call upon the federal, provincial, territorial, and Aboriginal governments to commit to eliminating the overrepresentation of Aboriginal youth in custody over the next decade.

The challenge in Saskatoon is profound. Youth incarceration is double the national average. As youth move into the incarcerated adult population, 92 percent are Indigenous men and 98 percent are Indigenous women. The loss in human potential is immeasurable.

ConnectYXE can begin to transform the cycle of Indigenous youth incarceration into a healthy cycle. There is too much at stake if a new cycle is not created.

*If I had ConnectYXE  
I would have been free  
Instead I spent three  
Wasted in a life that truly wasn't me  
Hoping for the best in the future  
I believe this is the true cure  
This is the seed to grow  
a community tree.*

- MARIO, SMART CITIES YOUTH ADVISORY MEMBER